



[www.doi.gov](http://www.doi.gov)

## News Release

Date: June 28, 2009  
Contact: Joan Moody  
(202) 208-6416

### **Secretary Salazar, Senior Administration and Congressional Officials Hold Town Hall Meeting on California Water Shortage *Announce Federal Efforts to Help Water Users***

**FRESNO, CA** – At a town hall meeting in Fresno, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, Deputy Secretary David J. Hayes, Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner Mike Connor and members of the California Congressional Delegation today announced multiple steps the Obama Administration is taking to alleviate the heavy toll on Californians resulting from the ongoing water shortage.

"Water is the lifeblood of agricultural communities across the West. We are here in the Central Valley to listen and hear directly from those suffering the impacts of the water shortage," Secretary Salazar told the hundreds of citizens gathered at Fresno State. "This community has my commitment, and the commitment of the Obama Administration, that we will work with state and local officials to address continuing conflicts associated with transporting water from northern California through the Bay Delta – that includes fisheries-related conflicts and other deteriorating environmental conditions in the Bay Delta."

Among the actions announced by the Secretary today are:

The appointment of Deputy Secretary David J. Hayes as lead official for Interior and the Obama Administration in coordinating the federal response to California water supply and related environmental issues with the state and stakeholders.

Renewed federal involvement and leadership in the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) and federal engagement in water supply issues that extend beyond the scope of the BDCP and the immediate geography of the Bay Delta. Significant progress will be made on the most contentious water supply and environmental issues by the end of 2009, including but not limited to the issues raised by the BDCP.

Continued efforts to distribute \$220 million in Recovery Act funding for specific water and environmental infrastructure projects in California. Of this amount, \$160 million will be directed to the Central Valley

Project. An additional \$40 million in drought relief funds will be announced within the month, the majority of which will go to California's Central Valley.

The expedited review of infrastructure projects that could potentially add flexibility to water delivery systems, including the proposed "Two Gates" project and the canal intertie project.

Salazar noted that in addition to these commitments, the Interior Department through the Bureau of Reclamation has already taken operational steps to stretch the scarce water supply. Those measures include:

The processing of more than 70 transfers that total approximately 245,000 acre-feet of water for the San Joaquin Valley.

The approval of rescheduling requests by Westside and Friant Division CVP contractors to allow them to preserve and use prior year allocations of approximately 250,000 acre-feet in San Luis Reservoir and 57,000 acre-feet in Millerton Lake.

The planned announcement of 2010 rescheduling guidelines by August 1, several months in advance of prior practice.

The approval of contracts to convey 170,000 acre-feet of non-CVP water through CVP facilities for irrigation in various areas affected by the drought.

The Interior Department will continue these efforts and work closely with California to continue facilitating water transfers between willing sellers and buyers, as well as other efficiency improvements.

"When a community is suffering the way this community is suffering, all parties must come together and work in good faith to find solutions," added Salazar. "We want to continue all these actions and also to learn from you today any other ways in which we can help."

###

— DOI —